

## The Relations between Southern India and the Straits Settlements.

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A few years ago, a very able paper was read by Mr. C. O. Blagden before the Straits Philosophical Society, on the subject of "Arabian Influences in the Far East," and evoked a warm discussion. I thought with others at the time that Mr. Blagden claimed too great an influence for the Arabs, both as a converting and civilizing agency in the Far East. I have since so far modified that opinion, from wider reading, that I am now fully convinced that it was the Arab traders, or rather the Arab bandits whom they brought in their train, who effected the conversion to Islam of the vast majority of the people inhabiting the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago. To this belief I have been induced, not so much by the discovery of any additional historical data beyond what the essayist put forward, as by the living testimony afforded by language, a proof more to be relied on than a thousand traditions. Almost every word in Malay connected with religious worship is pure Arabic, only modified by the difficulty the converts experienced in pronouncing the language of their teachers. The same is the case with the Achinese, Sundanese, Javanese—in a word, with all the languages of the Archipelago whose speakers have embraced Islam; the Malays, it may be added, have also adopted the Arabic character.

It is not, then, to India that we have to look as having imparted to Malaya the present religion of its inhabitants, or such elements of its civilization as are bound up with their creed. But civilization and social development, much as they may owe to religion, are not coincident with it, and I think still that Mr. Blagden went too far in claiming for the Arabs the lion's share of influence on the social life of the Malays. Right throughout the Indian Archipelago (which I take for convenience sake to include this Peninsula) there co-exists with *hukum*, or religious law, a great unwritten code of native custom, known as *adat*. This

not only flourishes side by side with the *hukum*, but often overrides it when the two come into conflict. Of this *adat*, part is immemorial usage, with its roots so deep in the past that they may not be uncovered. Part, however, is of more modern growth, and under this I should class all that these peoples have derived from foreign influence. We have no historical data full enough to enable us to separate these with accuracy; yet to presume that the present civilization of Malays, over and above what is included in their religion, was wholly indigenous and pristine, is to reject such data as we do possess, to scorn the testimony of language, and to assume that the Malayan races possessed an ancient civilization of their own, of which there is not a particle of evidence.

The Arabs came to the Far East purely as traders accompanied, no doubt, by a few pandits or religious teachers, to whose proselytizing agency was due the establishment of the Mohammedan religion in the Archipelago. Some few would seem to have settled down, but, beyond the teaching which found such ready listeners, they appear to have had little influence on native social life, and especially on the *adat*. Indeed as good Moslems, they would feel bound to uphold the *hukum* in opposition to the latter. Whence, then, did the Malays get the balance of their civilization, from the simpler arts which separate them from the rudest of savages to the code of native custom which, just as much as the Arab creed, gives them a right to be regarded as a civilized race? I unhesitatingly reply, from India, and probably, by virtue of its proximity, from Southern India.

There are abundant traces, both in Sumatra and Java, but especially in the latter, of the existence, long anterior to Mohammedanism, of a very complete Hindu civilization. How this came about, whether by conquest or pacific conversion, it is now impossible to say. Nor have we any historical records to show us what Hindu nation it was that exercised the first civilizing influence. In Java, indeed, a great Hindu empire continued right down to the year 1475 A. D., when the conversion to Mohammedanism took place, and numerous ruined shrines testify how widespread was the earlier faith. But the conquering or proselytizing Hindu stranger has entirely disappeared, for al-

though the kings of Manjapahit claimed to be descended from princes of Hindustan, the purely Javan appearance of their descendants somewhat belies this tradition. The visible traces of such a civilization in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula are much more feeble than in Java; they are, indeed, confined to a few ruins and inscriptions on stones and rocks, the former of doubtful import and the latter practically undecipherable, though the character is either Sanskrit or Pali.

In the absence of such visible tokens, we turn again to that infallible guide, the language of the people. As I have said above, the influence of the Arabs on the Malay language is almost confined to religion and religious law, but does not otherwise enter into the social life of the people. Far otherwise is it with the influence of the Hindus. Marsden (*Asiatic Researches*, vol. iv, pp. 223-7) writes as follows:—"The language (i.e. Malay), it is true, abounds at present with Arabic words, which their writers affect to introduce, because this display of literary skill is at the same time a proof of their religious knowledge; but they are generally legal or metaphysical terms borrowed from the Koran or its commentaries, are never expressive of simple ideas, have not been incorporated into the language (a few excepted), and are rarely made use of in conversation. The Hindu words, on the contrary, are such as the progress of civilization must soon have rendered necessary, being frequently expressive of the feelings of the mind, or denoting those ordinary modes of thought which result from the social habits of mankind, or from the wills that tend to interrupt them."

Of a truth Malay abounds in Sanskrit words, the significance of which is ably traced in the preface to Maxwell's Malay Manual. To go no further, the fact that the common Malay words for "religion" (*agama*), "a plough" (*tenggala*), "time" (*kali, masa*), with many others of the same kind, are derived from Sanskrit, points to Hindu influence as having first raised the Malay from barbarism, taught him some of the very crudest arts of civilization, and supplied him with a religion. Now, the Sanskrit element in Malay can only have come from India, and it fully justifies us, taking also into consideration the existence of a complete Hindu civilization proved by historical data to have subsisted in Java, in concluding that there must have been in

earlier ages a domination of intellect, if not of conquest, by some Hindu power of Hindustan over the whole of Malaya.

The defect of the language-test is that it does not aid us, except inferentially, in fixing the date of the commencement of this domination or in determining the length of its existence; but it may help us to decide from what part of Hindustan the civilizing influence proceeded. As to the former, all we know for certain is that the Hindu influence was antecedent to that of Islam; while as to the latter, in addition to the very slender evidence of history and tradition, and comparison with the relations of India with neighbouring countries, we can take as our guide the various Indian elements which have found their way into the Malayan tongue.

Sanskrit—that is, the pure Sanskrit of the Vedas—ceased to exist as a living language about 300 B.C. Various dialects, however, more or less debased from Sanskrit, but having a vocabulary largely identical with the parent tongue, continued to subsist as spoken languages. It is not inconceivable that the Hindu influence on Malaya may have begun when Sanskrit was yet a living language. As regards Java however, the Dutch scholars have fixed the introduction of Hinduism at the beginning of the 6th century A.D., and it would seem probable that its extension to Malaya took place about the same epoch or even later. Be this as it may, it is most unlikely that this early civilization of the Malays, which coloured their language so strongly with Sanskrit words, proceeded from any other than a genuine Aryan race, of Hindustan, speaking Sanskrit or a dialect closely akin to it. But within historic times the South of India has been inhabited by Tamulic or Dravidian races; and had their first civilization been imparted to the Malaya by Hindus of this stock, the Sanskrit words would have been filtered through a Dravidian medium, and appeared in Malay in a quite different form from that which they have actually assumed. It must be taken for granted, then, that this earliest influence proceeded from a genuine Hindu race inhabiting central or northern India, and perhaps commanding a part of its seaboard in the South by virtue of conquest or commerce, and who made this the starting-point for their pioneering work in the Far East.

I think we may entirely reject Crawfurds' theory that these first civilizers were Telegus. Had it been so, they must have left traces of their own vernacular on the Malayan speech, for it is inconceivable that the priests, as Crawford thinks, could have introduced into Malay elements of a dead language, used only for sacred purposes, as part of the common speech, while not a word of their own colloquial crept in to testify to the identity of the dominating race. For I think I am right in saying that there are few or no Telugu words in Malay, or, at all events, not one which might not equally well have come from Tamil.

None the less is it true a Dravidian race has had a very important influence on the language and social life of the Malays, and this in spite of Marsden's statement that "from the Telinga or the Tamool the Malayan has not received any portion of its improvement." This influence was probably brought to bear on Malaya a good deal later than the Sanskrit, and was, without doubt, the direct result of trade. Commercial intercourse was maintained from a very early date between the South of India and the trading towns which formed the emporia of the spice islands, notably Johor, Singapore, and Malacca. When the Portuguese, at the commencement of the 16th century, first visited these places, they were amazed at the concourse of foreign vessels assembled there. When this intercourse began it is impossible to say, but it was probably much earlier than the above. Snouck-Hurgronje, writing of Acheh, says that the settlement of Klings from Southern India in that country is of great antiquity: and that the Tamils were the leaders in this commercial enterprise in Malaya is clearly shown by the pure Tamil words—chiefly connected with commerce, though not altogether so—which have found their way into Malay.

These words are not numerous, but they are names of familiar objects, and we must remember that, as a test of the social influence of one race on another, the presence of one common word for some necessary thing is of more significance than a thousand technical or scientific terms, which are really only a part of the language of books, and do not enter into daily life. The Malay for "ship," *Kopal*, is pure Tamil, so are *Kedei*, "a shop," and *gedong*, "a storehouse." *Peti*, "a box,"



though it has a Sanskrit equivalent has also probably come through Tamil, for in Sanskrit it means "bag" or "basket," while in Tamil it has exactly the same meaning as in Malay. What can be clearer evidence of commercial intercourse—nay, of the Tamils having actually introduced the Malays to trade in bulk? They also imported and brought into use certain articles of commerce and animals with which the Malays were previously unacquainted, as is shown by the words *cherutu*, "a cigar;" *badam*, "an almond;" *kalde*, "an ass;" the fruit *belimbing*; *beludu* "velvet;" *bedi*, "a gun" (from the Tamil word "vedi," an explosion or report). All the above are pure Tamil. The derivation of *kuda*, "a horse," from *kuthirai* is not certain; but the pure Tamil *padagu*, "boat," may reasonably be taken to be the parent of the Malay *prahu*. If this be so, it would seem as if the Tamils first introduced the Malays to even the most elementary navigation, and, as they also gave them *kapal*, taught them to "go down to the sea in ships." A large number of words derived from the Sanskrit are common to both Tamil and Malay, the greater number of which were acquired independently by the two languages. The following are examples:—Mal. *Kali*, Tam. *kalam*; Mal. *denda*, Tam. *thendam*; Mal. *bahaya*, Tam. *bayam*; Mal. *muka*, Tam. *mugam*, &c. In nearly all these the terminal "m" is characteristic of Tamil; and where we find words derived from the Sanskrit which have this termination in Malay as well as in Tamil, we may fairly conclude that they come through the latter language and not direct from Sanskrit: e. g. *kolam*, "a pond" Tam. *kulam*; Sans. *kola*; and *manigam*, "a ruby," Tam. *mānikkam* and Sanskrit *manikya*. *Mampalam*, "a mango," is said by Maxwell to be derived from the Sans. *mahā pala* = "great fruit," through Telegu; but the Tamil for mango is also *māmpalam*, and I can see no reason for assuming it to be derived from the Telegu. Some other words derived from various languages, such as Persian, Hindustani, and Arabic, would seem to have also come through the Tamil, whose influence on Malay was undoubtedly antecedent to that of Arabic. As examples I may quote *mēja*, "a table" (Pers.), Tam. *mēsai* or *mēsa*; *baki*, "balance" or "remainder" (Ar.), Tamil *bakki*; *kapi* (Beng.), "a pulley," Tamil *kappi*; *topi* (Beng.), "a hat," Tamil *toppi*; *apam*, "a cake" (given by Marsden as

from Hindustani), Tam. *appam*. To the above list may be added the curious Malay word for "a bridegroom," *mempelai*, which is derived from the pure Tamil *mápillai*, "a bridegroom." This, again, is indicative of a very early Dravidian influence on the Malays. Their previous Hindu civilization had given them the ceremony of marriage, but it was left for the Tamils to super add a special title for the man on the eve of marriage, to whose position as such the Dravidians attach an unusual amount of dignity and importance.

I think I have said enough to show the fallacy into which Marsden fell in refusing to ascribe to the Dravidians of Southern India any influence on the language of the Malays, and to make it plain that the influence of the former people over the speech and social life of the latter began at a very early date, though not so early so that of the unknown race of Hindus who reclaimed Malaya from its pristine barbarism. The Southern Indians came as traders pure and simple, bartering for the wealth of the rich tropic forests the products of civilization. They do not seem to have settled down or intermarried with the Malays to any great extent—not, certainly, so much as in Acheh, where considerable colonies of Tamils took up their permanent abode. Their object being merely commerce, they went as they came, returning year by year as the monsoon favoured. In the earlier stages of this intercourse the Malays were probably Hindus like themselves, and would thus have admitted their visitors to a greater degree of familiarity and fellowship than is now the case. Then came the Arab conversion, favoured, no doubt, by such Tamils as had already embraced Islam: but from that time forth the Hindus became *kajirs* to the Malays, and the closeness of their intercourse declined. The commerce, however, continued as before, and the relations which the Portuguese found existing in the beginning of the 16th century were practically those which subsisted until the influx of European trade imported a new factor into the question, and the establishment of British settlements on the shores of Malaya crystallized the connection between Southern India and the Straits into what it is at the present day.

Had it not been for the successful introduction of Islam into the Far East by the proselytizing Arabs, we may suppose that

the Tamil influence would have grown in strength, and perhaps eventually have led to a considerable fusion of the races, especially along the coasts. Some such fusion has in later times produced the mixed race known as Jawi Pekan ; but in this the Bengali element is quite as strong as the Tamil, owing to the large number of north Indians who came to the Straits, either as voluntary immigrants or against their will as convicts, in the days when the Straits Settlements still formed an appanage of the East India Company.